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Leftist Activism in the Face of a Conservative Catholic Administration: The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter at Boston College

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**LEFTIST ACTIVISM IN THE FACE OF A CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC
ADMINISTRATION: THE STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY CHAPTER
AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

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Abstract: The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter (SDS) at Boston College, officially active from the year 1967 into the early 1970s, was an SDS chapter unlike all others. While most of the infamous SDS chapters of the time existed at liberal, public schools, the SDS chapter at Boston College was different. The Boston College SDS chapter had the unique challenge of having to organize in act while the looming pressure of a conservative, Catholic administration watching. This pressure led to multiple ideological changes, spanning from leanings towards revolutionary Marxist politics to softer reformist ideas. This paper documents these changes and catalogs exactly when and why these changes occurred, and the ripple effects that they caused across the campus of Boston College. This paper also maps the ways in which these ideological changes led to the Boston College SDS's intersectional interactions with other leftist groups such as workers unions and the Black Panther Party.

Introduction

The SDS or the Students for a Democratic Society was an anti-war group that formed in the 1960s in campuses across the US to push for leftist reforms and protest the war in Vietnam.² However, there is an added component to SDS activism when it comes to Boston College (BC), which is a desire not just to fulfill the goals of the national SDS, but also to directly combat the Jesuit Catholic establishment at the school. Thomas (Tom) Gallagher was one of the founders and leaders of the SDS at BC, reflects in an oral history interview in 1985, and he recalls a specific incident demonstrating this difference of national versus local, “I remember the thing that actually

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² Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

caused me the most trouble was not the abolition of ROTC. It was the availability of birth control information and devices in the campus infirmary. Oh-h-h— people went nuts.”³

This recollection of Gallagher is just one of many ways that the SDS at BC had to cope with the Catholic establishment at the school. At this time, birth control was becoming more readily accessible, so it would be a given to have it accessible to students. However, it had recently been outlined in a 1968 Papal Encyclical that artificial contraceptives were evil, and against the will of God.⁴ While the abolition of Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) may have been higher on the national list for the SDS, there was a greater priority to exert power over other men, as the famous social movement sociologist William Gamson suggested, in this case that would be the Catholic establishment vehemently against contraception.⁵

The SDS at Boston College is a complicated topic at face value, simply because the placement of a leftist student organization at a school which prides itself on adherence to Catholic Doctrine and the Papacy. This paper seeks to examine the ways student activism in SDS at Boston College both faced head on, and strategically dodged, the dogma of Catholic Church to further a radical progressive agenda at an intrinsically conservative school. This project builds on the work of scholars of the SDS and the New Left as a whole by focusing on a Jesuit Catholic University such as Boston College. It is the conditions of this religiousness, underlying support of the war, as well as the harsh administrative policies that shaped many of the actions taken by the SDS leaders at Boston College, sometimes even causing the BC SDS to stray from many of the policies of the national Students for a Democratic Society Organization.

Reactionary Radicalism

Student activists at SDS used the printed word to debate and promote their ideas, both at Boston College and on the national level. While it is true that major contributors to the SDS movement at Boston College wrote opinion-editorials in *The Heights*, the newspaper of Boston College, many such as Tom Gallagher wrote other places. One of these other places, per my correspondence with Gallagher himself, was a magazine called *Cement*, that was described by

³ Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher, April 15, 1985, Columbia University Department of Oral History, <https://dx.doi.org/10.7916/d8-0d4y-ec48>.

⁴ Pope Paul VI, “Humanae Vitae (July 25, 1968) | Paul VI,” The Vatican, July 25, 1968, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

⁵ William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (The Dorsey Press, 1975), pp. 36-38.

Gallagher as “unorthodox and short lived.”⁶ I made a few attempts to find this magazine in the archives of Boston College, specifically at the Burns Library, where all the archives of Boston College are housed. Sadly, I was made aware that while the Burns library has copies of this publication in their storage, it is unprocessed and will likely not be published for months or even years.⁷ Due to the lack of access to *Cement*, I rely heavily on sources from *The Heights* for primary source work, as it is about all that is available to me at this time. However, in the future, should *Cement*, or any other relevant publication become available to me, they would be studied for any supplementary material that they may provide for the base of this paper.

Hubert Humphrey, the US Vice-President to Vietnam War overseer Lyndon B. Johnson, took a fateful trip to Boston College in October of 1966.⁸ *The Heights* reports that four pacifists were handing out leaflets to advertise a picket line to protest the visit of who these four saw as a war hawk.⁹ After about an hour they were presented with an ultimatum to either leave or face violence, to which the activists chose the latter and were assaulted and sworn at. It was also reported that the members of the assaulting bunch had associations with the school’s ROTC, adding even more fuel to the fire as ROTC had already been a point of contention for progressives as mentioned by Tom Gallagher above.¹⁰ Upon the arrival of Humphrey, there were still many active protesters against his visit (Figure 1).

⁶ Thomas Gallagher and Brendan Mahoney, “The SDS at Boston College,” September 6, 2022.

⁷ This information is per Shelley Barber, the Archives Specialist at Boston College’s Burns Library

⁸ Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966”
<https://Newspapers.Bc.Edu/Iiif/Issue/Bcheights19661014/Manifest.Json?Manifest=https%3a%2f%2fnewspapers.Bc.Edu%2fiif%2fissue%2fbcheights19661014%2fmanifest.Json> Target="_blank"> — Boston College Newspapers,” *The Heights*, October 14, 1966.

⁹ Editor--The Heights, 4.

¹⁰ Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.



Figure 1: Hubert Humphrey visiting BC.¹¹

The most peculiar thing about this entire protest would be the immediate reaction from the student body and administration. The response of administration categorized those fifteen attackers as vigilantes who have “no right to oppose” those demonstrating, even if they disagree with the protestors.¹² Ultimately, BC Administration made it clear that, although these students thought they were aiding the university, they were tarnishing the reputation of the school. Finally, and more importantly than all, it was made crystal-clear that these students were not reflecting the values and beliefs of the “majority” of the student population.¹³

Early Ideological Struggle—1966

While the SDS was not technically allowed to participate or organize in any campus activities because they were not recognized by the Campus Council, it did not stop the SDS from penning a letter to *The Heights*. They wrote a wish list to “Santa,” which was a pseudonym for Fr. Walsh.¹⁴ This letter went beyond the early typical nonviolence and peace approach of the SDS, taking a more radical approach when referring to the university administration:

¹¹ Sub Turri, *Vice President Hubert Humphrey Arrives on Campus, with Protestors in Rear.*, October 13, 1966, October 13, 1966, <https://www.proudfreain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

¹² Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966, 4.

¹³ Editor--The Heights, 4.

¹⁴ SDS at BC, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 11 — 14 December 1966,” *The Heights*, December 14, 1966, 4.

Dear Santa: We are fed up with the results of our previous nonviolent approaches in dealing with bourgeois, imperialist, fascist menace on our campus. We have been bogged down in our efforts to construct a miniature People's Republic, through the bumbling bureaucracy of the capitalist demon. If the Marxist ideal, which we hold sacred, is to be eternally perpetuated, it indeed appears that total revolution is imminent We will not and cannot be concerned by bloodshed. Our goal is too lofty to be disturbed by any value that others may see in human life. Terrorism is our only feasible alternative... ¹⁵

This letter reads nothing like the generally soft-spoken writings of Tom Hayden. This characterization is not to disparage the writings of Hayden, as he was a revolutionary in his own right. Rather, this is meant to categorize a contrast between Hayden and the BC SDS. This reads like a manifesto. The appearance of words such as bourgeois, imperialist, and fascist in a negative context juxtaposed with words such as Marxist, revolution, and bloodshed in a positive context, offers a level of radicalism unheard of thus far in the history of the SDS at Boston College.¹⁶ In accordance with the letter to Santa format, this decisive statement had hopes of being delivered directly to Fr. Walsh (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Fr. Walsh as Santa in *The Heights*.¹⁷

One contrasting argument to this theory comes from the work of Max Elbaum, a historian who chronicles the New Communist Movement of the late 1970s in many books and articles.

¹⁵ SDS at BC, 4.

¹⁶ SDS at BC, 4.

¹⁷ George Viens, *Father Walsh as Santa*, December 14, 1966, Newspaper Article, December 14, 1966, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=bcheights19661214.1.4&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

Elbaum argues that historians and those reflecting on the period often try to cover up the more radical ideas of students who were apart of these movements.¹⁸ Elbaum also proffers that although the height of the New Communist Movement came in 1968, it had been building for years prior. When US students were polled about the 1968 election, about twenty percent of them said that they align much more with someone such as Che Guevara, rather than any of the candidates up for election.¹⁹

In a reflective piece written by Tom Hayden titled “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” close to his death in 2016, Hayden talks about 1966 as a year of transition.²⁰ Hayden talks about how this year, the same year that the BC SDS began getting off of the ground, was a year in which the SDS began to reject the Port Huron Statement as “too reformist.”²¹ Hayden goes on to admit that for those organizations of the SDS across the nation that were more focused on Marxist radicalism had to abandon the Port Huron Statement. Hayden even argues that the “default” pacifist ideology that the SDS began with was something that less and less students across the nation could identify with.²²

To return to the BC Santa manifesto, such radical words were infrequent, if mentioned at all in the Port Huron Statement.²³ There are a few plausible reasons for a detachment of the SDS at Boston College from the softer, “default” New Left approach of Hayden to a more radical Marxist approach. One of these factors would be the tensions within the SDS, and the powder keg that was the 1967 SDS National Convention.²⁴

The influence of these Catholic ideas of being were especially pertinent in the ever-relevant Humphrey demonstrations. Many of the counter-protests to the SDS-aligned people at Boston College directly associated anti-Communism with Catholicism, chanting things such as “Kill a commie for Christ.”²⁵ The direct association with anti-leftist ideas and Christianity is not a new idea, but it had yet to be seen on the Boston College campus, as previously, attacks on SDS

¹⁸ Max Elbaum, “Project MUSE - What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?,” 2002, <https://muse-jhu-edu.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/article/30229>.

¹⁹ Max Elbaum.

²⁰ Tom Hayden, “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2015, 16–39, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812290998-002>.

²¹ Tom Hayden, 28.

²² Tom Hayden, 30.

²³ Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Port Huron Statement*.

²⁴ Jack A Smith, “An Independent Radical Newsweekly,” *National Guardian*, July 15, 1967, 6.

²⁵ Bill McDonald, “Hello HHH . . . and Vietnam | PROUD REFRAIN,” October 18, 2017, <https://www.proudfrefrain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

members had been based solely in opposition to leftist ideals, rather than a mixture of opposition to leftism and a desire to embrace individual Catholic beliefs. The people chanting these anti-communist phrases were not the same people who were entrenched in religionless Christianity, these are the people who adhered to orthodox Christian doctrine. These orthodox Catholics had now come to associate their religion with anti-communism, and by extent anti-SDS beliefs. In an ironic way, the anti-leftist rhetoric from Catholics motivated an even further form of leftism, easily identifiable with Marxism and Maoism, because of Catholic prejudice. Catholicism and the SDS seem to act as two magnets of the same pole, pushing one another further away from each other, and more importantly, the middle.

Beginning of Action—1967

While 1966 may have been the nominal start for the SDS at Boston College, 1967 is most definitely the start of action. 1967 as a catalyst for action was also likely in part due to the official rejection of student organization recognition by the Campus Council in January of 1967.²⁶ When reasons for the rejection of the SDS had to be listed, the Campus Council Chair, David Gay, cited the actions of the national SDS, as well as the actions of the Harvard SDS.²⁷ BC's SDS did later collaborate with Harvard's SDS in 1970, to protest against Secretary Robert McNamara, who was seen as a war hawk.²⁸ The SDS was seen not just as an activist group, but rather a group made to "overthrow existing social forms,"²⁹ implying a Marxist tendency of the group at BC. This insinuation from Gay reinforces all the points made above. To summarize, the administration-aligned Campus Council's lens of Jesuit Catholicism motivated even more radical, Marxist politics from the BC SDS.

Tom Gallagher recalls what he terms vigils that started in the Spring of 1967, which would consist of SDS members lining the sidewalks around lunch time on Friday.³⁰ His firsthand accounts are an invaluable source. During this time, the SDS members would hand out period pieces, whether it be poems or photos of the Vietnam War.³¹ While the information acted as

²⁶ John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College," *The Heights*, February 10, 1967, *The Heights*, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10 edition, 3.

²⁷ John Golenski, 3.

²⁸ Bob Ruff, "55,000 Attend Harvard Rally," *The Heights*, May 13, 1970, Volume L, Number 27 edition, 00.

²⁹ John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College, 3."

³⁰ Bret Eynon, *STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960'S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher*.

³¹ Bret Eynon.

subliminal messaging, the loudest part about the demonstrations was the silence, that Gallagher and others vowed to hold during these demonstrations.³² There would be silence unless there was a conversation to be had between an interested bystander and an SDS picketer.

Controversially, some of the SDS decided upon an even harsher form of period pieces to use: photos of “napalm babies” from *Ramparts* magazine.³³ These were images of children who had been mutilated by the napalm used by the American soldiers. These photos had a goal of inspiring a hatred of the war by seeing the destruction that it had caused to native Vietnamese people. Rather, this was taken in a different way. Students at BC who had received the “glossy,” as Gallagher called it, versions of these innocent children were disturbed, but for the wrong reasons.³⁴ These people were disturbed that the SDS would hand these items out, not disturbed that the innocent people in North Vietnam were facing biological warfare from the US and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

These photographs were handed out in silence. However, this silence was nothing like the manifesto-like letter to Santa. In only a few months, there was a transition from active, violent revolutionary politics to passive non-violent resistance. Perhaps the re-softening of the SDS was meant to help the SDS’s case with the Campus Council. Conversely, it is also possible that this was no resoftening at all, perhaps this form of protest was even harsher. To the latter point, being less obnoxious with a passive protest likely played to the hand of the SDS, because of its perception. The perception of these protests is that they were meant to point out minor flaws, that all lead back to a main issue (in this case, Vietnam). But the best thing about this protest is that it did not explicitly seem like a desire structural change, which tended to scare people, as Gamson had warned prospective protest groups of.³⁵ Although the Boston College SDS, specifically, did desire a sort of Marxist change, the vigils did not seem to be violent and structurally challenging.

In April, about two months later, the impossible happened. In the BC SDS’s second attempt to gain recognition from the Campus Council, in a vote of 9-3, they gained recognition.³⁶ However, there were a few amendments to this acceptance, including the second amendment,

³² Bret Eynon.

³³ Bret Eynon.

³⁴ Bret Eynon.

³⁵ William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, 38.

³⁶ Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 19 — 7 April 1967,” *The Heights*, April 7, 1967, 3.

which said that if the SDS violates any undergraduate government policy, their recognition would be immediately revoked, a policy that no other club had to deal with.³⁷

The Height of the BC SDS—1968-1969

April twenty-fourth, 1968, would be one of the boundary testing days for the ideological associations of the BC SDS. The Boston College Faculty Committee for Peace and the Students for a Democratic Society Chapter planned an event called the “Academic Day of Conscience.”³⁸ This event started with a mourning for those lost at war and those lost in “ghetto rebellion,” which effectively evoke Marxist imagery of the rebellion of the proletariat.³⁹

If this was not enough radicalism from the SDS to drive Fr. Walsh and other Jesuits mad, there was a movie presentation of *Victory Will Be Ours*, a French film that reflects on the struggle of the North Vietnamese in their communist revolutionary struggle against the French.⁴⁰ The turn towards open sympathy to communism was a boundary test to say the least, in comparison to the soft politics of the previous Spring.

The lecture portion of the day ended with a speech from the storied professor and author, Howard Zinn, known for his progressive history of America, *A People’s History of the United States*.⁴¹ In this book, Zinn speaks very briefly on the SDS, but argues in favor of including women not only in movements for women’s rights, but in all leftist issues of race and class struggle, for the furthering of the organization.⁴² Zinn’s talk that night called for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam, and collaboration with the new Vietnamese Communist government (certain to win the war, in Zinn’s eyes), in order to rebuild a post-war Vietnam.⁴³ Zinn’s talk attracted a large crowd of not only SDS members, but curious students in general. The existence and even further, the popularity of Howard Zinn’s talk, proved two points.

³⁷ Editor--The Heights, 3.

³⁸ Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968,” *The Heights*, May 7, 1968, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 edition, 5.

³⁹ Editor--The Heights, 5.

⁴⁰ Editor--The Heights, 5.

⁴¹ Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States : 1492-Present*, vol. Third edition (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=1052356&site=ehost-live&custid=s4194587>.

⁴² Zinn, 507.

⁴³ Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968.”

It was this merger of the SDS and the CPF (Catholic Peace Foundation) that led Tom Gallagher into writing letters and writing articles for *The Old Mole*, an alternative Marxist magazine named for a Marxist metaphor of the old mole, or the idea that there is an old mole of revolution that will pop its head up every so often throughout history.⁴⁴ *The Old Mole* had gained quite a following of the more radical leftists (Marxists, Leninists, and the like), which Gallagher saw as an opportunity to write in a revolutionary perspective, that he was not afforded with *The Heights*.

In a piece titled “eagle,” Gallagher speaks about the platform of the SDS (notice how it is still referred to as the SDS) at Boston College. While this platform included standard pacifist tenets of SDS policy such as a desire to abolish ROTC and demand for birth control access across campus, this article demanded more class-based, radical things.⁴⁵ Gallagher and the SDS asked for university for intervention in the rent-gouging of off-campus housing, which would essentially be an authoritarian intervention into capitalist dealings.⁴⁶ Gallagher even delved into the criticism that the students at Boston College get for their actions in the SDS, targeting priests and members of the administration. To this accusation he made the following remark:

The main thrust of the campaign was to build a movement rather than a structure. Our position papers indicated that we felt that student power in itself was insufficient. Students should play a large part in running the university, but they were responsible to society at large and should realize that they could not entirely humanize the university until oppressive social structures throughout all of America were changed as well.⁴⁷

Gallagher makes the intricate, metaphysical argument that we cannot humanize the people in the positions of oppression until the positions themselves are abolished. In layman’s terms, Gallagher argues that removing positions of oppression such as administration would allow for the people in those positions to be freed, but more importantly, the oppressed would be freed. Also in this article, Gallagher argues that the cause of radical pessimism about change is not just the people in power, but the ideals they hold. Gallagher cites Irish Catholic Conservatism and the reputation of prestige that it carries as a shield from progressive change.⁴⁸ These ideals are virtually

⁴⁴ Marxists.org Editors, “Glossary of Terms: Old Mole,” Marxists.org, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/o/1.htm>.

⁴⁵ Edward Romano et al., “Old Mole: Old Mole,” *Old Mole* 1, no. 9 (14 1969), <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28015584>, 6.

⁴⁶ Romano et al, 6.

⁴⁷ Romano et al, 6.

⁴⁸ Romano et al, 6.

untouchable, as they are entrenched in anything and everything about Boston College; in turn, the only way to make progressive change is destruction of the structures that allow tradition to rule the campus of BC.

The BC SDS would soon turn to help striking General Electric workers which consisted of chants advocating for the destruction of the “world scab” that GE was.⁴⁹ This was not just strike advocacy for fairer treatment of the GE workers. This was advocacy in favor of Marxist politics for the complete annihilation of bourgeois ownership of the means of production. The starkest contrast between this action, and the action of the Day of Conscience only a year earlier was the view on North Vietnam. In 1968, the view of Ho Chi Minh and his government was based on their desire to withdraw American troops from the conflict. Additionally, it was clear that Zinn, and others, had sympathies for the innocent people slaughtered in the war in Vietnam. However, Boston College students, during the GE protests, chanted “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!”⁵⁰ This chant was accompanied by the other chants in favor of abolition of General Electric for their malpractice. This chant was not just sympathy towards Ho, this was allegiance, and even an allusion to Catholicism and Fr. Walsh’s position as administrative Santa. Put simply, the General Electric Strike allowed SDS at BC students, and students across the region, to align directly with a union for radical politics.⁵¹

The Peak and Successive Landslide—1970

Radical activism was at its all-time at Boston College following the Academic Day of Conscience, the General Electric strike, and a transition in the general ideology towards Marxism. The following year, 1970, would be a year of a great high, and a year that would represent the symbolic end of the SDS at Boston College.

The shifted ideology of the BC SDS ultimately led to Huey Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther Party to speak of Boston College in the Fall of 1970.⁵² While the Boston College SDS members were honored to have a revolutionary leader such as Huey Newton appear

⁴⁹ Abarca, 106.

⁵⁰ Abarca.

⁵¹ Abarca, 107.

⁵² Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, “Rupture,” in *Black against Empire*, 1st ed., The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party (University of California Press, 2016), 341–71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1xxsj1.22>.

on their campus, the authors of “Rupture,” a book chapter which catalogues the search for allies of the BPP, describes Newton’s visit to Boston College as an obligatory one. A visit which Newton needed to make in order to maintain college students, especially those far from the home of the BPP, as allies for the party (speech below).⁵³ Huey Newton however, was welcomed with open arms by the radical students at Boston College, as he presented the ideals of the Black Panther Party.

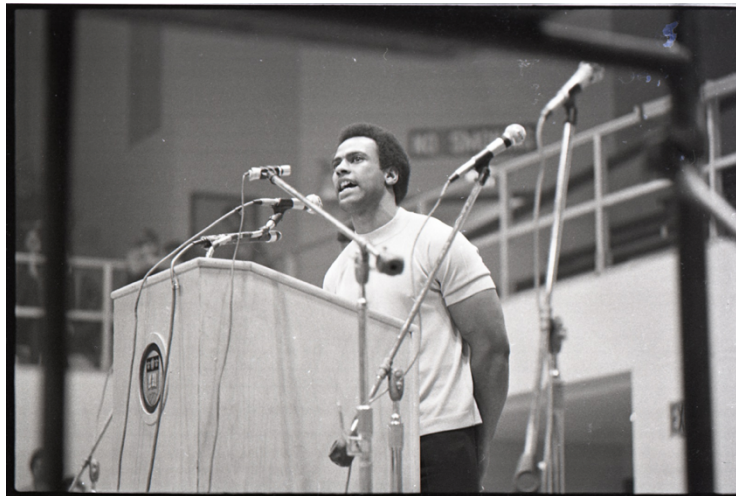


Figure 3: Huey Newton speaking at Boston College.⁵⁴

Tonight, I would like to outline for you the Black Panther Party’s program and also explain how we arrived at our ideological position and why we feel it necessary to institute a Ten Point Program. A Ten Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It’s a *survival program*. We feel that we, the people are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism is rampant. . . . We intend to change all of that. In order to change it, there must be a total transformation. But until such time that we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive, so, therefore, we need a survival kit. . .

This plea from Huey Newton emphasized the necessity of students and specifically SDS members in the struggle for global liberation of oppressed peoples. As Rossinow notes in *The Politics of Authenticity*, it was a point of importance for the BPP to have interracial protests for freedoms, that consisted of more than Party members.⁵⁵ The example of the University of Texas

⁵³ Bloom and Martin, 355.

⁵⁴ Jeff Albertson, *Huey P. Newton Speaking at Boston College: Newton at the Podium, November 18, 1970*, November 18, 1970, Photograph, November 18, 1970, <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/muph057-b004-sl514-i018>.

⁵⁵ Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 201.

SDS in Rossinow's book, show how the BPP and SDS learned much from each other. The students of the UT-SDS had immense organizing power, while the BPP had a larger array of resources to provide breakfasts for local Austin kids.⁵⁶

While the population of black students at Boston College was not extensive in 1970, it was around this time that the Black Student Union at Boston College would form.⁵⁷ This speech from Huey Newton was aimed at members of this group, in part, but also in part to all students who sought to effect change through activism at BC. Many of these members of the Black Student Union would join the SDS in the late stages of its lifetime and would independently partake in a short takeover of Gasson Hall at BC.⁵⁸ Regardless, the connections between black students, the Black Student Union, the BPP, and the SDS at BC are undeniable, as many of the members of these groups would entirely overlap with one another. While the numbers of black students in the SDS at BC were small (as were the numbers of women in the SDS at BC), this was most easily attributed to the small numbers of black students at BC in general.⁵⁹ However small these ties were with the SDS, the ties of black students at BC to the BPP, and its leaders, proved strong as Bobby Seale would speak at BC four years later, about a revived brand of black nationalism.⁶⁰

By November of 1970, Boston College's chapter of the Students for a Democratic society had interacted with various elements of leftism, everything from labor to the Black Power movement. This was not the same group that struggled to gain recognition from the Campus Council. This was not the same group that tried to remove the ROTC chapter from campus. This was a student organization that had truly become radical, and it was a group that had made significant change and was on its way to make even more improvements towards forming a truly democratic society.

This decrease in popular support is clear while searching for the key-term "SDS" in the Boston College online magazine repository.⁶¹ Between the years of 1960-1969, there were one hundred seventy-six results for this keyword.⁶² In the years of 1970-1979, there were only thirty-

⁵⁶ Doug Rossinow, 200.

⁵⁷ Thomas Gallagher, Thomas Gallagher Oral History of the SDS at BC—Conducted by Brendan Mahoney, March 28, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J12-UtrX3NA&t=1451s>.

⁵⁸ Thomas Gallagher.

⁵⁹ Thomas Gallagher.

⁶⁰ Black Student Forum, "Bobby Seale, New Directions for the Black Panther Party," *The Heights*, February 4, 1974.

⁶¹ Boston College Libraries, "Boston College Newspapers," 2022, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/>.

⁶² Boston College Libraries.

two results in total.⁶³ This is a drastic drop, to say the least. When the SDS did happen to be mentioned in the 1970s, it is mentioned by the magazine of Newton College (a future part of Boston College), 885, as a rag-tag, disorganized group focused on “trashing” property and lighting things on fire.⁶⁴ This type of action makes one think of the aforementioned “bad sixties,” when leftism supposedly went off the deep end. The SDS had all but stopped formal operations, and activism by 1972.

Conclusion

All in all, the story of the SDS at BC is one of resilience. The SDS chapter at Boston College would perpetually face challenges, to which they would meet with great valor, and overcome in the name of radicalism. The BC-SDS would morph from a pacifist organization to one of radical Marxist politics, with the intention of abolishing the structures of oppression at Boston College, and the world in general. While it is unlikely that the Boston College SDS chapter had worldly impacts like they had hoped, they paved the way for leftist politics at Boston College, such as the modern Marxist magazine, *Platypus*, which has a Boston College specific reading group, that is recognized by the Office of Student Involvement (the successor to the Campus Council).⁶⁵

As a student at Boston College myself, I can walk into Maloney Hall or McGuinn Hall, and see a stack of pamphlets titled *The Platypus Review* ready for any student at the school to take advantage of (seen above, McGuinn to the left and Maloney to the right). It is quite easy to make the argument that these sources of leftism would not be as readily available if it were not for the SDS at Boston College. As Gallagher, Simon, Moriarty, and others had hoped for and had built up, radicalism was made more “glamorous”⁶⁶ and acceptable at Boston College and will be for the foreseeable future.

⁶³ Boston College Libraries.

⁶⁴ 885 Editors, “885, Volume II, Number 4, 7 November 1972,” November 7, 1972, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=eighteightfive19721107-01.2.2&srpos=27&e=-----197-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-SDS----->, 1.

⁶⁵ Platypus BC, “The Platypus Affiliated Society – Platypus Boston College Primary Marxist Reading Group Summer/Fall 2020 – Winter 2021,” Platypus 1917, Fall 2020, <https://platypus1917.org/2020/09/03/platypus-boston-college-primary-marxist-reading-group-summer-fall-2020-winter-2021/>.

⁶⁶ Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.

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